



Broxtowe  
Borough  
COUNCIL

# **MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE**

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# **MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE**

## **1. Purpose and Background**

To provide managers and employees with information about what the menopause is including symptoms and causes, and how to practically support woman in the workplace who are experiencing it.

## **2. Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment of this policy has been undertaken to ensure that the implications of its introduction will not cause adverse impact or discrimination against different groups of employees with the organisation.

## **3. Objectives**

The objective of this policy is to provide managers and employees with relevant information in how to support woman in the workplace who are experiencing the menopause. The policy will outline the responsibilities and roles of Managers and raising awareness so that woman can feel confident in being able to ask for appropriate support or reasonable adjustments.

## **4. Causes**

The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51. However, around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.

Most women will experience menopausal symptoms. Some of these can be quite severe and can significantly impact everyday activities.

The menopause is caused a by a change in the balance of the body's sex hormones, which occurs as one gets older. It happens when ovaries stop producing as much of the hormone oestrogen and no longer releases an egg each month.

Premature or early menopause can occur at any age, and in many cases, there is no clear case. Sometimes it can be caused by a treatment such as surgery to remove the ovaries, some breast cancer treatments, chemotherapy/radiotherapy, or due to another underlying health condition such as Addison's Disease or Down's Syndrome.

Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before periods stop and last around 4 years after a woman's last period, although some women experience them for much longer (up to 12 years). This is known as the perimenopause.

A woman can usually tell if she is experiencing symptoms characteristic of the perimenopause because her menstrual periods start changing and they can become heavy and prolonged.

The changes of the menopause transition (perimenopause) typically begin several years before the natural menopause. This is a time when the levels of hormones produced by the ovaries fluctuate, leading to irregular menstrual patterns (irregularity in the length of the period, the time between periods and the level of flow) and hot flushes (a sudden warm feeling with blushing). Other changes associated with the perimenopause and menopause include night sweats, mood swings, vaginal dryness, and fluctuation in sexual desire, forgetfulness, trouble sleeping, tearfulness and fatigue.

Symptoms normally associated with the menopause can include hot flushes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, discomfort during sex, difficulty sleeping, low mood/anxiety, reduced libido, memory/concentration problems. This list is not exhaustive.

Women can experience both physical and psychological effects of the menopause. Some experience few or no symptoms whilst others can have symptoms that can debilitate them. Some women can suffer such debilitating symptoms that it affects their work and the role that they do.

Further guidance can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf>

## **5. Support from Managers**

Regular, informal discussions with employees may help Managers to understand any changes to health, particularly in relation to the menopause. Whilst the menopause may be traditionally viewed as taboo or too awkward to discuss, it is better to acknowledge that it is a normal part of life and that reasonable adjustments or accommodations need to be discussed where possible.

Many female employees may not wish to speak to a male Line Manager about the menopause, therefore they should be encouraged to speak to another female colleague who could broach the matter on their behalf, a female Line Manager within the Department, a female member of the HR Team or a female Union Representative who can raise any issues or concerns. The Council's Occupational Health service and Employee Assistance Programme would also be available for guidance.

In addition to regular, informal meetings (one to one's), it will also be good practice to discuss any workplace matters at the annual Performance Appraisal, and this includes general health and wellbeing at work. This will allow for a confidential discussion where any workplace adaptations or adjustments to be raised or suggested.

The Council expects Line Managers to:

- act in a supportive, caring way
- be approachable to female employees who may be experiencing menopause and minimise any embarrassment
- maintain confidentiality at all times
- encourage an atmosphere where health matters can be discussed
- adhere to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, respecting protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 such as age and gender
- undertake risk assessments if appropriate in terms of relevant tasks normally undertaken including DSE assessments
- implement any appropriate changes and reasonable adjustments to accommodate women experiencing menopause – this can include:
  - o flexible and agile working e.g. adjust start/finish times or homeworking
  - o encouraging flexibility during the working day to accommodate breaks to suit personal needs relating to menopause symptoms or difficulties
  - o considering the working environment e.g. temperature of rooms and proximity to fans, heaters, air conditioning or windows
  - o offering flexibility in terms of clothing and work uniforms

## **6. Application in Existing Policies**

The Council's Attendance Management Policy has been amended to include menopause as now being excluded from trigger points alongside absences relating to disabilities or pregnancy-related absences.

The Council's Flexi-Time Working Policy can be applied to support female employees in the management of menopause symptoms, issues and complications.

The Council's Employee Assistance Programme is available at all times to discuss health matters including menopause.

The Council's Occupational Health provider is also available to support females experiencing the menopause and can provide the Council will advise on any suitable reasonable adjustments.

Toilets are available at all sites.

Chilled water is also available at all sites.

The Council Offices refurbishment will also aim to include a multi-purpose "Quiet Room" which could be also be used, if appropriate.

## **7. Legislation**

The following are relevant legislation relates to managing the support for menopause in the workplace:

- Section 2 of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure "the health and safety and welfare at work" of all employees;
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 place an overriding duty on employers to make workplaces suitable for the individual who works in them;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require the employer to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and take action to prevent exposure to risks; and
- The public sector equality duty places a legal obligation on all public bodies to promote gender equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.